

Summer Weather Safety Week 6/25/07

During Summer Weather Safety Week, June 24 – 30th the Springfield-Greene County Health Department joins the National Weather Service and the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency in reminding residents to stay safe from severe weather.

Each year more than 1,000 tornadoes touch down in the United States, and lightning strikes the earth 20 million times each year. Lightning is actually more prevalent during summer storms.

To protect yourself from **lightning**, follow these precautions.

- Take shelter in a sturdy building.
- Unplug appliances and do not use the telephone.
- Do not take a bath or shower.
- If you are caught outside and have no shelter nearby, stay away from tall objects like trees, power lines and flag poles.
- Stay away from natural lightning rods like fishing poles, camping gear, bicycles, tractors and golf clubs.
- If there is no shelter nearby, get into a car and roll up the windows.
- If you are in the woods, get under a low clump of trees, squat down on the balls of your feet. Put your hands on your knees and your head between your knees.
- If you are boating or swimming, get out of the water and go into a sturdy shelter immediately.
- Listen for information on when the lightning storm has passed.

To protect yourself from a **tornado**, listen for watches and warnings. When conditions are right for a tornado to develop, a watch will be issued. Get ready to take shelter. When a tornado is spotted, a warning will be issued. Take shelter immediately in a room on the lowest floor of your home. A basement is best, but if you do not have a basement, go to an interior room with no windows and get under a sturdy piece of furniture.

If you are in a mobile home, in a car or outside and there is no shelter nearby, lie down flat in a ditch and cover your head with your arms. Flash flooding may occur, so watch for rising water.

According to the National Weather Service, **floods** and **flash floods** cause more deaths in the U.S. than any other weather-related incident – approximately 140 each year. When floods or flash floods are imminent, emergency response leaders may ask you to evacuate. Follow their instructions quickly, using identified evacuation routes.

Do not drive through flooded areas, even if you think you know how deep the water is. The majority of deaths due to flash flooding occur when people try to drive across flooded roads. Floodwaters may hide road damage, and your car can easily be swept right off the road by as little as two feet of water.

If you are outside when flooding occurs, move to higher ground immediately! Avoid small rivers or streams, low spots, canyons and dry riverbeds, as flash flooding can occur very quickly. Do not try to walk through flowing water more than ankle deep and do not allow children to play around streams, drainage ditches or viaducts, storm drains, or other flooded areas.

During severe summer weather, listen for updates and instructions on an all hazards weather alert radio or from a credible news source. For more information, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658.